
Next Generation Assessment Task Force

Summary – October Meeting Feedback

Task Force Purpose: to make recommendations to the State Superintendent concerning the main components that should be in our next generation assessment system, and the priority that should be placed on each component as we move forward with funding requests and assessment contracts.

Important Ideas Gained from the First Meeting

- Different assessments serve different purposes – one test cannot meet all needs.
- An assessment *system* needs a systemic approach. The parts within the system need to work together with each other, while still serving varied purposes.
- An assessment system must balance equity and excellence. It needs to be accessible to all students, while also offering challenging content.
- A positive assessment experience includes timely, meaningful feedback.
- State and national assessment trends throughout recent decades show how assessment is shaped by political, social, and educational thinking.
- Funding an assessment system has challenges. We need to dream big, then decide what to tackle first.

Questions

Purpose

- Q:** What is our purpose(s) for our assessment system? What questions do we want to answer? Just what does it mean to be proficient, or advanced, or ready for college, or ready for work?
- Q:** What happens next once the task force makes recommendations?

Sustainability and Funding

- Q:** How do we get policymakers and legislators to take this seriously, to treat balanced assessment as a fundamental cornerstone of future education? What keeps this from being the “flavor of the decade?” How do we build something that can be sustained over time?
- Q:** If we think about adding benchmark assessments, how do we make sure it helps support and improve instruction, rather than being viewed as taking away from instructional time?
- Q:** What is the time frame for making any changes? Is our focus on the long-term, or just the immediate future?
- Q:** How do our assessment funds compare to other states? What funding sources are there?

Professional Development

- Q:** Professional development is needed around assessment literacy, especially formative assessment strategies. What role will the state play in this? We need to frame strategies that work, and support adult learning to have this make a difference.
- Q:** What should the role of Wisconsin educators be in the assessment-development process? Should we involve educators more in test item writing, and build it into professional development plans and/or course credit?

Defining Assessment System Components

- Q:** What should be the relationship between classroom, school, district, and state assessments? How much of this should be tied into accountability?
- Q:** How do we reconcile the need for standardization and technical quality in large-scale assessment, with the desire to assess progress on complex problem-solving and critical-thinking tasks?
- Q:** How do we develop an assessment system that is tailored to our needs and is affordable, yet still meets federal assessment and accountability requirements (NCLB, or other legislation yet to come)?

Assessing All Students

- Q:** How do we make sure that future assessments are sensitive toward various cultures, students in poverty, students with disabilities, and English language learners? Accessibility for all students is a concern.
- Q:** How do we address the assessment needs of “gray area” students – those who are chronically low achieving, yet are not eligible for the WAA-SwD assessment for significantly disabled students? Some have disabilities, some do not, but our current assessments do not yield meaningful feedback about these students.
- Q:** How much does the language barrier effect assessment results for English language learners? What strategies can we explore to help reduce the impact of language barriers so that we have more accurate information about how well our English language learners are doing on academic skills?

Technology and Assessment

- Q:** How might we use technology to create meaningful assessments? Would computer adaptive testing meet some of our needs – would it provide more specific diagnostic information in less time than traditional testing?
- Q:** If we move to computer-based testing, how will we address equity of technology access across the state?

Making Connections

- Q:** How can we pull together Wisconsin's educational stakeholder groups to work together on this effort? An assessment system is one part of a broader instructional system. This effort needs to tie in with standard's revision, professional development, higher education, teacher licensing, and other local/regional initiatives.
- Q:** How might we pool our resources with other states, so each state doesn't have to do everything on their own? What cross-state collaborative efforts might we try? What do we gain by collaborating rather than maintaining our independence? What can we learn from successful testing models in other venues?
- Q:** What can we do to connect this effort with higher education? There are good connections to teacher education, professional development, and teacher licensure.
- Q:** How might we make the assessment system flow seamlessly from the current state initiatives (America's Diploma Project, Partnership for 21st Century Skills) to refine our academic content standards, so that career- and college-readiness are skills are more clearly defined and assessed?

Reporting and Using Assessment Results

- Q:** How can we use the information from assessments more effectively? How can reports be user-friendly? We need reports that give students, parents, and educators meaningful information about each student's learning and suggestions about what to do next to move to the next level of achievement.
- Q:** How can we provide reports/results that give meaningful information about a student's level of achievement, the growth in their learning over time, the instructional areas needing remediation and enrichment, and suggestions for next steps tailored to each student's performance? Will the continuity of data trend lines be interrupted if we move to a new test?
- Q:** How can we develop assessment reports that show student and school/district growth over time, compared to other students/schools and agreed-upon benchmarks? What can we learn from other states who are producing growth reports?